# The Flying Man

by Harry Irving Greene

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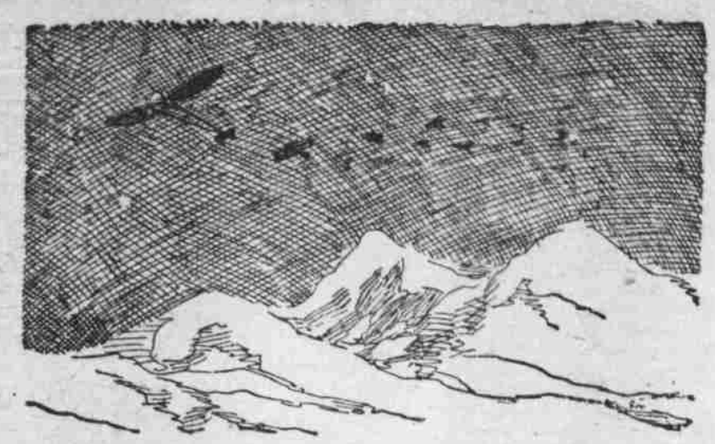



SYNOPSIS.

Professor Desmond of the Peak observatory causes a great sensation throughout the country by announcing that what appears to be a satellite is approaching at terrific speed. Destruction of the earth is feared. Panic prevails everywhere. The satellite barely misses the earth. The atmospheric disturbance knocks people unconscious, but does no damage. A leaf bearing a cabalistic design flutters down among the guests at a lawn party. It is identical in design with a curious ornament worn by Doris Fulton. A hideous man-like being with huge wings descends in the midst of the guests. He notices Doris' ornament and starts toward her. The men fear he intends some harm to Doris and a fierce battle ensues, in which Tolliver and March, suitors of Doris, and Professor Desmond are injured. The flying man is wounded by a shot from Tolliver, but escapes by flying away.

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

"God forbid. Yet Clay shot in an effort to protect me—perhaps even did save me—and I cannot forget that. Look! Is that not he?" March gazing through the gloom saw a form sitting listlessly upon a seat in the deep shadow of a tree.

"Tolliver!" he called.

"Here," came the answer faintly and they hurried to his side. He was bent over, evidently suffering, and by the light of the Japanese lantern they saw that his face was drawn and pale. Quickly Doris bent over him.

"Are you badly hurt?" she inquired, a world of solicitude in her voice.

"I don't know—but I am in a good deal of pain. He struck me a terrible blow in the side."

"But why did you come to this place—why did you not go into the house, where we could care for you?"

"Because I felt faint and thought I would be better off here by myself. You had better go and look after the others. I can take care of myself until things have quieted down." She became very decided, very imperative in an instant.

"Indeed you shall not." She faced March. "Go at once and bring Dr. Raymond. I will remain here until you return." Then she turned her back upon him as she again addressed the sufferer.

"I am very sorry. And if you are really injured much you shall stay at our house until you are well and I, myself, will see to it that you are attended to." March faced about and started upon his errand with a frown Of course the milk of human sympathy for the suffering was all right enough when distributed in reasonable quantities—he, too, was sorry for Tolliver—but there was such a thing as overdoing even sympathy. And Clay would stay with them and be nursed by her personally in case he thought he was seriously hurt! Then of course he would think he was seriously hurt, any man would under such circumstances, he would himself if the chance had come to him—and would have prolonged his sufferings to the last possible moment. Jealously he stamped away, wondering if he had been in Tolliver's place if she would have been so distressed over him.

He entered the house and found Dr. Raymond, who had just finished dressing Desmond's severe cut, told him of Clay's complaint and returned with him to the bench under the tree. Doris had seated herself by the sufferer's side, unnecessarily close as March thought, and was speaking to him in a low tone. She got upon her feet and greeted them as they approached. "I am so glad you have come, Doctor. I think he needs you." The physician bent over the sufferer.

"Where does it hurt you most?"

"My left side. He hit me pretty hard—I guess with the joint of that infernal wing. Felt like I imagine a mule kick does."

"Can you get upon your feet?" Tolliver arose slowly and stood slightly stooping.

"Yes, but I cannot stand erect. I seem to have a list to port." The man of medicine grunted.

"All right—I'll see you through. Take hold of his other arm, March." Alan, obeying, slipped his hand beneath the shoulder and they slowly walked the injured one within the house, and then by Doris' directions into an unoccupied guest chamber. "And now—" said Raymond, with a bow and a smile to the girl. She comprehended, curtseyed and began to retreat.

"Yes, I will leave the room until you summon me. I will be close at hand, however. And be sure to be very careful with him unless you wish to incur my displeasure." She closed the door and was gone, leaving the three men alone.

Deftly the physician, with the help of March, bared the afflicted side and the former ran his fingers over it, pressing, tapping and questioning as to pain, his eyes closely following every expression of the pallid face below him. Three minutes of this and he announced his decision.

"Fifth rib fractured. Nothing else damaged that I can discover. I'll soon have him strapped up. Going to a hospital?"

"No, I am going to remain here for tonight at least." Redmond congratulated him

"Best thing you could do." He quickly divested the patient of his outer clothing and placed him between the sheets, bandaged him tightly about the chest and then stepped to the door. "Miss Doris," he called. Almost instantly she appeared, pale of face but resolutely calm.

"I have just been in to see poor Mrs. Emmonds—isn't it horrible! Several of the scouting party have returned with automobiles which they secured somehow, and they are now taking her and the rest of the guests to their homes. The scouts report considerable disorder upon the streets but nothing alarming. The city has not heard of the Flying Man as yet, but the telephone is in working order again and they are trying to get the police department on the wire in order to notify it. Some of our guests have received very bad news and they are frantic to get to their homes. None of their people are known to be dead, but there are disappearances, injuries and serious after effects in several cases." She approached the bed. "How is our individual patient, Doctor?"

Raymond closed his pocket case with a snap. "Nothing more than a broken rib, and I have fixed that up for the time being. All the treatment he needs is feeding, assistance when he has to move and rebandaging by a physician from time to time. Keep him as quiet as possible. He will be out in a week or ten days at the latest—" Redmond smiled—if he wants to be," he added jocularly.

Doris gave a sigh of relief. "I am glad it is nothing more serious. And will he need any further attention tonight?"

"Nothing more in the way of treatment can be done. I have left him a sleeping potion which he can take presently if he sees fit. But of course he will require more or less physical assistance for a time when he has to move." She nodded comprehendingly.

"I will get a hospital nurse first thing in the morning to do the professional part of it." A little laugh burst from her lips. "But I shall insist upon remaining head nurse and waitress. And in payment the patient shall read to me from Homer, Dante and Kipling. He recites delightfully, you know." Tolliver was a lawyer, was in reality a pleasing reader and speaker, and once more jealousy came crawling like a worm into Alan's soul. From the bed came the voice of the injured man.

"It is kind of you—too kind. But as you know, I have no place to go except a hospital, and if you could tolerate me for a few days until I can move about—"

"Tolerate you! I should never forgive you if you did not stay. Also, father is equally insistent. After what

Doris Bent Over Him.

we have all gone through together tonight—after what you men have done to encourage and protect us women—and after the way you personally fought and got hurt for us, how dare you, lying there helpless, speak of toleration! I will not listen to such nonsense." The swiftness of her speech and the intensity of her manner caused March to pick up his hat.

"And having served my purpose I think I had better depart and leave you to your duties," he remarked dryly. He approached the bed and held out his hand. "Good night, old man, and good luck. Good night, Doctor—" his eyes met the girl's for a fleeting instant—"good night, Miss Fulton." He backed bowing into the hall and started for the front door, but before he had made half a dozen steps she was at his side, her hand touching his shoulder.

"Good night—Alan."

She had seldom called him by his first name and the sound of it from her lips thrilled and mollified him slightly, though jealousy still rankled him. "Good night, good friend. I think you acted splendidly through it all—nobly. Rest assured I shall not forget it."

"Even when he is reading to you?" he returned with a trace of sarcasm. Over her face came a tiny frown, which, however, vanished as quickly as the shadow of a passing bird.

"But he was injured in my defense. Would you have me turn him out into the night when he is suffering?" Knowing full well that he was unreasonable, March was still internally sulky as he answered her.

"Most certainly not. But you seemed so abnormally enthusiastic over the prospect of having him with you for days and maybe weeks."

"Perhaps you would have me intimate to him that his presence is a burden!"

"Not at all. But there is reason in all things."

"Except a man."

He let his hand fall upon the knob and stood confronting her, his face troubled, his voice low and earnest. "Doris, you know that I love you, and when a man loves a woman as I do you he would be a strange animal if he were not jealous of everybody else. He might not want to exactly kill every other man that came hanging around her, but if he had horns he would be sure to hook them out of the way. And I do recognize the fact that Clay is popular among those of your sex at least. And when I see your solicitude for him when he is not even injured seriously—well, it makes me wonder if I were in his place if you would be equally sympathetic. Do you suppose you would?" She averted her eyes, glancing down at the dainty toe of her white slipper, which tapped the floor rantalizingly.

"How can I tell since you are not seriously injured?"

He turned up the collar of his light coat preparatory to facing the cool night air without. "Doris, if you are really in doubt as to your feelings toward me I am content to be patient until they have crystallized and you know your own mind. But if you are merely letting me make love to you during all this time through vanity—" Her eyes commenced to flash and he paused abruptly.

"Do you wish me to answer you tonight?" There was a challenge in her manner that caused him to hasten to dodge a bit.

"By no means. And taking all in all into consideration I do not know but that things are better as they are. You will be with Tolliver considerably in the near future, and so far as I am concerned you and he shall not be interrupted. This shall be his day in court to plead his case. At the end of his stay I shall come to you again, but until then I shall leave you undisturbed unless you inform me that I can be of assistance or that you wish to see me for any reason. "Good night." He opened the door, holding out his hand to her as he did so.

She took it with great formality. "Very well, it shall be as you say. If I really need you I will certainly let you know. And please do nothing desperate while you are reveling in your misery. Nor forget that I praised you Adios, mia amigo." She smiled perfunctorily and retired a step, and with a last bow March passed down the steps, biting his lips at the mockery of her final adieu.

Once upon the street his feet fell heavily. For the first time that night he realized that he was weary, inexpressibly weary, with a pain that pulsed through his head with the steady insistency of a slowly beaten drum. He had intended to go into the more thickly settled business district to see if he could be of any assistance there, but so worn out by the excitement and mental and physical strain of the night was he, and so disgusted did he feel that the sufferings of others now gave him little concern. At any rate there would be plenty of uninjured to assist the unfortunate, a hundred who were well to one who was not, and besides there was little likelihood of his being able to do more than get in the way of those more qualified for the task. Be that as it might, the rest of the world would have to worry along without him for the night—tomorrow he might feel called upon to sacrifice himself. He went straight to his apartments.

CHAPTER V.

The Declaration of War.

It may well be doubted if ever before in its countless hundreds of generations this gray old world became so agog as it did on the morning of the twenty-first of August, the day succeeding the passing of the scudding visitor from the depths of space. From Maine to the Philippines, from the Yukon to Chile, from England to Japan, from Norway to South Africa, from mid-ocean liner to mid-ocean liner, from creeping jungle streams to roaring glacial torrents, from desert city to forest town in a score of different languages news urchins wildly shrieked or softly lisped their "extras," in many cases the first and last edition extraordinary the populace ever heard of during their lives. The earth had been brushed by another celestial body which had passed it so closely that its roar had deafened and its breath overwhelmed even to the death scores of human beings way up on the back bone of the North American continent. Buildings had been crushed like trampled eggs, trees torn up by their roots as dentists pull teeth from their sockets, while dust whisked from the visitor as by a mammoth broom had fallen and carpeted a large section of the earth with a coverlet as thick and soft as a feather bed. The earth had shuddered like a horse lashed with a whip, tidal waves had run riot and total annihilation had only been prevented by mere chance, good luck, miscalculation, Divine mercy, or as one Italian paper naively put it, "by the foresight and prompt action of Signor Desmond, the discoverer." Not a telegraph, telephone, cable or wireless upon the world but buzzed and crackled with the tremendous news, and every observatory in the world where the atmosphere was clear or the view unobstructed had its great telescope trained like a hostile cannon upon the supposed path of the departed body. Yet not a trace of it did they find, and more astonishing still, the microreflectoscope did not register it. Where it had gone was as great a mystery as from whence it had come, and all the wise savants of the long tubes could do was wag their heads and form their own opinions. Some came boldly forth with explanations closely coinciding with Professor Desmond's, others held diametrically opposite opinions, while still others—and perhaps these gentlemen were the wisest of all—withdrew themselves clamlike into their shells of reserve and refused to be cajoled forth by the most tempting of flatteries or the most exasperating of proddings. But great day as it was for the press and the wire, it was still greater for certain of the Adventists. To them the failure of the world to be destroyed was but a temporary discouragement, fully offset by the certainty that the first small body had been but a herald to warn the earth of the larger and close following one which was to destroy it. Great day, also, it was for the dead and injured, for their names were blazoned in great type the world around; in fact it was a great day for almost everybody.

And then close following the first announcement of the passing of the worlds in the night came a second scarcely less startling or spectacular. The earth had at large upon it a new and marvelous being, in fact a former inhabitant of the other sphere who had been blown off, fallen off, jumped off or in some other manner dislodged from his native habitat, and who was now stalking abroad in the land of the free seeking whom he might devour. He was seven feet tall, reddish brown in color, monkeyish of limbs and had pinions that spread over thirty feet. He had been seen by at least a dozen reputable (?) citizens, some of whom had fought a duel with him in which he had escaped after being severely wounded. This caused a great roar of laughter, especially in foreign countries, and the newspapers of the world treated the story according to their national characteristics. The British press treated it with cold sarcasm and deep regret at the yellow journalism of the American newspapers, the French with shrieks of derision, the Latins with insolent abuse and the Germans with utter contempt. The Yankees were out-Yankeeing themselves, they were making themselves ridiculous, they were comedians unapproachable, they were contemptible braggarts, or they were great dunnerheads, according to the nationality of the sheet that printed the item. Instantly the cartoonists came into their own and for a day the world was theirs. The Flying Man was depicted in every conceivable shape that their vivid imaginations could conceive. He looked like an eagle, a crow, a rooster, a crane, a bat, a demon, an angel. Learned judges cracked ponderous jokes at his expense, the ministry used him to point a moral and adorn a tale, mothers employed him as a bugaboo to frighten their children and the Congressional clown pretended to try and get a law passed whereby the Government should provide him free transportation back to his own land. Far and wide dime showmen exhibited huge pictures of him and announced his presence in chains within their tents, and that chains did really rattle within, those without could readily hear. Even in the city where he had appeared his existence was generally discredited, notwithstanding the previously good reputations for veracity of those who vouched for him, the more charitably minded attributing him to the overwrought imagination of one of the party on the lawn, due to the excitement of the event, and suggesting that through hypnotic suggestion all were made to believe they saw the same things he imagined he did—such things being by no means impossible among half-hysterical people. Only the Adventists accepted him seriously, they being convinced that he was a personal representative of the Deity. As to those who had really seen him and had announced the fact, they at first grew indignant beneath the storm of doubt and ridicule which assailed them, then realizing the futility of further assertion closed their mouths in silent contempt.

It was on the second day after the eventful night that Desmond, now famous throughout the world for his discovery and announcement, yet chafing that his sanity should be questioned on the subject of the Flying Man who had given him such an ugly wound, conceived an idea which he immediately proceeded to put into secret execution. In company with two celebrated analytical chemists, he proceeded to the Fulton home and with his knife cut several blood-stained shavings from the steps where the Flying Man had stood for an instant bleeding from the wounds inflicted by Clay's weapon. These thin slices of wood they conveyed to a laboratory, where with microscope and chemicals they subjected them to a thorough examination and analysis. At the end of the tests Dr. Johns, famous throughout the land as a chemical analyst of body fluids, submitted his report, which was indorsed in every respect by his scarcely less famous colleague. The report stated that they had subjected the stains to every known test and the results were absolute and scientifically incontrovertible. The stains were made by blood, yet the chemical reaction obtained by the tests were different from those resulting from the blood test of any animal heretofore known. All animals up to this time had been classed either as warm or cold blooded, the blood of one of the latter, a frog or a snake for instance, being very dissimilar to that from one of the former, say a chicken or a dog, whose vital fluid—being warm—much more closely resembled the blood of man. In the specimens which they had analyzed the blood was a mixture of the two, therefore of necessity the creature who shed it was apart and distinct from any other human or other animal in that he was neither warm nor cold blooded, but contained the corpuscles of both. What the characteristics, habits, food or mentality of such an anomalous being probably were was an unguessable problem, but in all likelihood he was omnivorous with a decided carnivorous or meat-eating preference. At any rate as an addition to science he was invaluable. The paleontologist, the ornithologist, the ethnologist, the anthropologist, the pathologist—there was a long list of them—would give all but their lives to possess him. Professor Desmond received the report, read it with interest, and cautioning his associates to remain quiet for the time being filed the paper away for future use.

She Was at His Side.

Three days later a wild-eyed farmer galloping into the city on a foaming horse threw himself from the saddle, stumbled across the threshold of the central police station and lay there frothing at the mouth until they picked him up and revived him with brandy and ammonia. Eventually they managed to extract his story, which was told amidst frequent sobbing breakdowns, wild flights of incoherency and pitiful grovelings when he plead abjectly for help both Divine and human. In substance he said:

"My name is Jones—Simon K. Jones, and I have a small place about five miles out in the country on the old Creek road. I live there with my wife and little girl eight years old—Oh, in the name of God, men, help me—help me save her—my daughter—my darling—all right, I'll try and be calm, boys, for I know you will all do what you can for me.

"It happened an hour ago—just about—but it seems a year already. I was coming across a field and happened to glance up at the sun to see what time it was and I saw him—yes, I saw him—the Flying Man, for of course I had heard of him—I guess everybody in the world has. He was up, 'way up, mebby a thousand feet, and didn't look very big and at first I thought he was some funny kind of a hawk, then I got a better view and saw it was a man. There was no chance of its being a flying machine, for I've seen them and they don't flop their wings. I ran then—ran as fast as I could, looking up at him over my shoulder. He saw me too, for he commenced to come down in great circles like an eagle does when he is soaring off a cliff into a canyon, and he was getting in on me closer at every swoop. But I had a good start and beat him to the house by quite a bit and rushed in and locked the doors and shoved my wife in a closet and then took down the gun—an old musket that I always keep loaded with birdshot. This was just about noon time and my daughter was at school half a mile away. Well, everything was still for a while, a kind of a creepy still with nothing but a few locusts singing, still, still—still as a graveyard at high noon in midsummer—seemed as if I had never known it to be so still, then I heard something light on the roof and go pat, pat, soft like, as if somebody was trotting around on it barefoot, and then I knew he was up there and looking around. Then that sound stopped and for a while everything was quiet as death again outside and I was standing against the wall where I could see both windows in front of me and with my ears—well I guess I never listened so hard before. I could even hear the flies buzzing on the pane clear across the room and hear my wife breathing behind the closet door. Pretty soon I heard him try the kitchen door very soft, but I had locked it and the next I heard of him he was fooling around out in the woodshed. That made me get cold, for I thought he was after the ax to smash in the door, but after a while he seemed to go out of there and for a long time there wasn't a sound—I don't know how long, it seemed like an hour, but I guess it was mebby five minutes. Anyway I got so nervous that I couldn't stand still any longer, so I pulled off my boots and tiptoed out into the kitchen. I peeked out of the windows, but couldn't see anything, and after looking and listening for a while I crept back soft as a cat into the parlor, and my God, men! There he was with that awful face pushed tight against the window pane and those great June bug eyes of his looking straight in at me. I don't reckon I was ever so scart before in my life—know I wasn't. I just lost control of myself, let out a yell and blazed away at him. He ducked like a flash and I don't reckon I hit him, for I was too scart to take aim. Next thing I remember I was cocking my gun and couldn't remember whether I had loaded it or not, so I tried it with the ramrod—it is an old-fashioned muzzle loader, you know—and found that I had. Must have put in the shot first, though, for when I tried to shoot it later only the cap snapped.

"Well, I kind of pulled myself together and went sneaking around again sweating and trying to keep up my spunk by telling myself if I ever got another shot at him he'd never go around bothering people again in this world. Next I saw of him he was about a hundred yards away over by the stone pile and was lifting up a rock that must have weighed seventy-five pounds While I was wondering what he was up to he got it in his arms and made a hop or two and them great black wings shot out, and up he went flap, flap, circlin' around and getting straighter overhead every minute till he was so straight up I couldn't see him any more from the window. Must have been a couple of hundred feet up when I lost sight of him. Then of a sudden I got cold all over again, for I knew what he was up to now—knew it as well as if he had told me. And I wasn't mistaken neither, for about a minute later came a smash-bang and that rock come through the kitchen roof like a thousand of brick and knocked the stove all to smithereens.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Simple Lines.

What we all need is grand simple lines in our characters and our work as well as in our toilettes.